

# Vol II Issue 3

## HISTORIC BURLINGTON COUNTY PRISON MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

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July 22, 2003

Dear PMA Members:

Thank you for your continued support of the PMA. Enclosed is your membership card, which entitles you to free admission to the Jail and a discount of 10% off gift shop purchases.

Attached is a list of current members. If your name is not on the list, you have not paid your 2003 dues and will not receive further letters or notices.

A general membership meeting was held on May 24, 2003 at which was discussed the annual "Haunted Prison". I advised those in attendance that the person who always designed and ran the event is no longer interested in doing so. Since the meeting, I have attempted to try to find another such person. I have contacted Eastern State Penitentiary to see if anyone connected with their haunted event would be interested in helping us. So far, I have had no luck. Thus, it does not appear that we are going to have a haunted event this year. I think that we all agree, however, that we should endeavor to have a fall event in 2004. Perhaps we can tie such an event in with the "Ghost Tour" which is also still in the works. On the "Ghost Tour", actors dressed in period costumes will portray people who had connections with the Jail. If any of you know of anyone who is interested in acting or haunted events, and who would like to help us with these projects, please let me know.

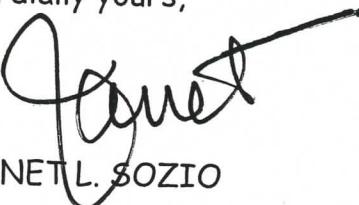
I am happy to report that the County has hired a new Jail attendant. Marisa Sassaman replaces Mike Reilly, who has retired. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment Mike on the yeoman's job he did as the first attendant in many years. Marisa is a recent graduate of Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania, having graduated with a degree in history. We wish her all the best in her new position and pledge our cooperation and help.

A decision has been made to purchase cell phones/walkie talkies for the use of the attendant and docents. These would be useful at events such as the Haunted Prison, and when more than one tour group goes through the Jail at a time. They would also be quite useful for security reasons. This, I believe, is the type of thing that the PMA should support and fund.

As promised in my last newsletter, I am including more old newspaper excerpts, including excerpts relating to prison breaks. To say that security was lax is something of an understatement; our local jailbirds basically did everything but walk out the front door. I love the second jailbreak story. I wonder if any of you knows the definition of "palaver". I didn't until I looked it up. Only one of many fascinating things you learn when reading old newspapers is how language changes in a relatively short period of time. I was also taken by the great diversity in the crimes committed by the escapees. What a colorful little group they were.

Have a great summer. I will write again in the fall. Until then, I remain,

Cordially yours,

  
JANET L. SOZIO

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**PRISON MUSEUM ASSOCIATION  
2003 Members**

Catharine B. Armstrong  
Richard E. Andronici, Esquire  
Timothy E. Annin, Esquire  
Senator Martha Bark  
Marybeth Baron, Esquire  
Richard Baron  
Dan Barto  
Joan Boas  
Michael A. Bonamassa, Esquire  
Pete and Karen Cawthon  
John Devlin, Esquire  
Alan Domers, Esquire  
David B. Edwards  
Thomas Faile  
Freeholder Vince Farias  
Stan and Ellen Fayer  
Hon. Dominick J. Ferrelli  
Glen Filippone, Esquire  
Brian Frampton, CPA  
Edith Freeman  
Kristen and Natalie Freeman  
Kenneth H. Gilbert  
Florence Gomez  
Freeholder Bill Haines  
County Clerk Phil Haines  
Barbara Hatfield  
Ed Holloway  
Charlie Holman  
Marie Del Presto Jerlat  
Warren S. Jones, Esquire  
David A. and Daniel A. Kimball  
Kay Kline  
Stewart LaVine  
Pat LePre  
Dianne Main  
Ina M. McCrum  
Michael E. McHale  
Carole Melman and Glenn Kenny  
Joan and Kenneth Milby  
Rocco Minervino, Esquire  
Michael L. Mouber, Esquire  
Mount Holly Business Association  
Janice Myers  
Lynn Pitts  
Jeff and Laurie Rabin  
Sheryl Richards, Esquire  
Dennis C. Rizzo and Elizabeth Van Houtte  
Michael Rothmel, Esquire  
Rhondi Schwartz, Esquire  
Robert Silcox  
Delsea Sozio  
Dena & Drew Sozio  
Janet Sozio, Esquire  
Jeanette Sozio  
Brooke Tidswell  
Brooke Tidswell, III  
Scott and Debra Vombrack  
Barbara Westergaard  
Gary Woodend, Esquire  
Freeholder Jim Wujcik  
John P. Yetman, Jr., Esquire

## MT. HOLLY HERALD

**January 8, 1881** A local preacher ran away with his wife's sister recently and brought up at Smithville, where he obtained employment in the machine shops. His whereabouts was discovered by an officer who was on his track, and as soon as he learned of this fact, he made himself scarce. Local preachers seem to have a weakness for this sort of thing.

**January 15, 1881** A young man who recently departed from Burlington in considerable haste left a legacy to two Mt. Holly females, which it is said, will not be appreciated when received.

**January 22, 1881** No convicts have died in the state prison for the past ten weeks. Considering the number of specimens of broken down and diseased humanity that compose a large majority of occupants of the institution, this is a very good showing, although several consumptive patients in the hospital are very low, and may be expected to drop at any moment.

**January 22, 1881** Captain Hunter, the turnkey at the Lumberton station, was struck in the head by a huge piece of liver, thrown by an unknown hand as he was walking homeward the other night. He has an idea of the assailant who made this dastardly attempt on his life is a man who came into the station the other day and demanded a ticket for Peru and on being refused, threatened him with death.

**August 6, 1881** As turnkey Harry Warner was looking out into the jail yard, at an early hour on Tuesday morning, he saw something which very much resembled a rope hanging over the outer wall and he at once concluded that something was radically wrong. He at once went into the lower tier and found the grating in the bathroom pried completely off, showing the manner in which the prisoners had made their escape. A search through the lower tier developed the fact that three of them were missing. The are Charles Hart, thirty years of age... he was committed by

Justice Reeves of Bordentown, July 5th for assault and battery on a boatman. The other two men were James Burk and Thomas Kelly and they were committed by Justice Powell, of Beverly, for fighting and resisting an officer... All of the escaped prisoners have been quiet and orderly since their incarceration and seemed to be perfectly satisfied to await the action of the Grand Jury. The rope by which they managed to get over the wall, was made of strips of bed ticking and its construction was a marvel of ingenuity. There were stops at various points along the rope to give the climber an opportunity to rest and the rope itself was stout enough to hold a ton. Sheriff Conover has offered a reward of \$75 for their capture, or \$25 each.

**September 3, 1881**      Official Populations.

|                     |                        |                  |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Edgewater: 149      | Recklesstown: 151      | Georgetown: 100  |
| Biddle's Island: 27 | Bordentown City: 4,258 | Smithville: 285  |
| Sykesville: 121     | Cookstown: 100         | Mt. Holly: 4,630 |

**August 12, 1882** Turnkey Taylor was sitting on the front steps of the jail a few minutes after eight o'clock on Saturday evening, waiting for a breeze to cool his heated anatomy when his attention was attracted by a sharp whistle coming from the direction of the surrogate's office. On its being repeated he walked in the direction of the sound and met young John Dolan coming toward the fence. "What's up?" asked the turnkey. "I'm pretty sure I saw a man jump off the wall just now," was the response. But the turnkey was not going to believe anything of that kind, besides it was too early in the evening for prisoners to attempt to break jail. Just then he glanced along the wall and saw the end of a rope dangling from the top, and he realized Dolan was right.

Rushing into the jail for his revolver he came out and grasped hold of the rope which had been fastened to a small tree outside the wall. It was swaying to and fro and it was evident someone was climbing up on it from the inside. Both men took in the slack and when the fellow got near the top he suspected something was wrong and took the back track. After waiting a few minutes longer without another attempt being made to escape they

went in to the jail, but by this time the news of the escape had spread through the town like wildfire, and a crowd of 100 or so men and boys came tearing up the street...

If prompt measures had been taken it is certain that at least one of the three fugitives could have been captured, but there was so much confusion and useless palaver that by the time they had begun to talk business the prisoners had a half hour to start. The turnkey then went through the jail and found the absentees to be William Griffin, James Henderson and Thomas Gibbs. Pearce, a partner of Henderson's had tried to get away, but failed. They found him going up into the third tier, his face covered with perspiration from the violence of his exertions. The escape was effected by sawing off the bars of the window under the stairway and was well planned...

Sometime ago Mrs. Taylor heard the sound of sawing and communicated the fact to her husband, who in the company of the sheriff made a tour of the cells, but could find nothing wrong. After this the sounds were not heard for a week or two. Where the bars were sawed was filled up with a mixture of soap and blacking, making it almost impossible to detect.

Henderson was the ringleader of the plot to escape. He boasted that he had broken out of the Cherry Hill prison, and said, "No jail could hold him". He was committed with Charles Pearce of Palmyra for stealing billiard balls at that place. The worst of the gang is William Griffin, of Moorestown. Last Christmas, he made a murderous attack on John Krieder at Moorestown, but got away and went to Europe. He returned this summer and worked a few days at the canning factory there, but as soon as he was paid off he went on a drunk and assaulted several persons, and when officer Watson tried to arrest him, he bit a large piece of flesh out of his arm. It is said that he was in Moorestown on Saturday night, and remained there until Sunday night. His companion is Thomas Gibbs, who is committed from Florence for bigamy, and is said to be the husband of at least a half dozen loose women. The story was telegraphed to various points and it is likely that at least two of the men will be recaptured.